Wright & Morten Farm Newsletter

wright & morten Veterinary Surgeons

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Are You Vaccinating Ahead of Spring Turnout?

For many of you Spring is the time to vaccinate for BVD and Leptospirosis ahead of turnout. This is particularly relevant to Spring calving herds where vaccinating prior to service ensures optimum protection for both the cow and her developing calf. Below are our top tips for successful vaccination

- Make sure you store the vaccine correctly- all vaccines must be stored in the fridge. We recommend checking the temperature of your fridge regularly (at Holly Tree we check ours twice a day!). Any vaccine vial opened must be used that day
- Make sure that you are administering vaccine correctly- ***Spirovac*** goes under the skin whilst the ***BVD vaccines*** are given into the muscle.
- When vaccinating large groups of animals make sure that you change your needle regularly to reduce the risk of needle induced injuries or infections. Sterimatic injection kits help to protect both animal and operator.
- If you are using a vaccine gun make sure that you calibrate it before use so that you know every animal is getting one full dose of vaccine. Guns should be thoroughly cleaned and dried after use.
- Ensure that heifers are fully vaccinated ahead of their first service. If you are using a vaccine where the primary course requires two doses (such as ***Spirovac or Bovilis BVD***) then this mean that the first dose must be given at least 6 weeks prior to service.
- If you are serving multiple groups of heifers at different times throughout the year then take care to ensure that each group are vaccinated prior to service. It is also important to ensure that having had their primary course heifers then join onto the main herd vaccination programme within 12 months. It is better to give a booster earlier than required than it is to risk letting animals go more than 12 months between vaccinations.
- We currently offer two options for BVD vaccination. The first is ***Bovela*** vaccine which can be used in heifers from 3 months of age, is a live vaccine and requires only a single dose as the primary course. The second option is to use ***Bovilis BVD*** which can be used from 8 months of age, is a killed vaccine and requires 2 doses 4 weeks apart as the primary course . Please speak to any of the farm vets to ensure you are using the vaccine that best meets your farm's needs.

We offer competitive prices for Spirovac (leptospirosis vaccine), Bovela and Bovilis BVD.Please contact the office and ask for Rachael to place your order.

Upcoming Courses

Mastering Medicines Courses

We still have a couple of spaces left on Bridget's Mastering Medicines workshop for beef and sheep farmers running on Tuesday 22nd May.

Attendance at this course will allow you to meet Red Tractor Guidelines for the safe administration of medicines. The course runs from 10:30am to 2:30pm and costs £45 (excl. VAT) per person.

For more information or to book a place please contact the office on 08458 330034 and ask for Vicky.

Calf Scour

This month we have seen a dramatic increase in cases of calf scour. This has ranged from newborn calves through to 8-10 week old animals. We commonly see this at this time of year as winter draws to an end and housing has been in continuous use for several months.

Calf scour has a range of causes including E. coli infections in newborns, viruses and cryptosporidium in calves aged 1-3 weeks and coccidiosis in older calves. All of these pathogens build up in the environment over time and are particularly problematic where it is not possible to fully clean out, disinfect and rest housing between calves.

The most important consideration when treating scouring calves is preventing dehydration- particularly in very young calves. Dehydration is the major cause of death in scouring calves and it is recommended that they should receive 8 litres of replacement fluids every day to replace fluid losses.

There are a range of other treatments available however the use of these should be based upon a veterinary diagnosis of the cause of the diarrhoea. We are easily able to test samples in our in-house laboratory at Holly Tree and provide results the same day.

HUSKVAC

HUSKVAC is now available and due to its short shelf life must be ordered in specifically for each farm. Please ring the office and speak to Rachael to discuss your requirements.

Trace Element Deficiencies

Copper, selenium and iodine are considered to be the key trace elements required by cattle and deficiencies will impact on performance, however their role is often exaggerated by poor nutrition, husbandry and ineffective parasite control.

It is important to appreciate that every farm is different and often fields within the same farm will have different levels of trace elements. This means that it isn't possible to develop a 'one size fits all' approach to trace element supplementation, instead it is best to work closely with both your vet and a nutritionist to develop a strategy that is appropriate for your farm.

Copper Deficiency

Copper deficiency can occur as a primary deficiency on copper deficient pastures, however secondary deficiency due to antagonism by molybdenum, sulphar or iron is much more common. The clinical signs of copper deficiency are usually seen in young animals at pasture and manifest as poor growth rates and a grey/brown discolouration of the coat. The hair coat can be thin, dry and sparse and widening of the growth plates of the long bones in the legs can lead to lameness. Diarrhoea is classically seen after turnout onto pastures with high molybdenum concentration. Prolonged or severe copper deficiency can lead to anaemia.

In adult cows deficiency can be associated with reduced fertility due to depressed or delayed oestrus behaviour.

Blood sampling a group of 7-10 cattle to assess plasma copper levels is useful to diagnose clinical disease; however it provides no estimation of body copper reserves. This is best measured using liver biopsy samples taken from cull cows at the slaughter house.

Should a deficiency be diagnosed then it can be corrected through the use of in feed copper supplementation or via a slow release bolus.

Selenium and Vitamin E Deficiency

Selenium and Vitamin E play key complimentary but independent roles in protecting cells against damage, this means that they are particularly critical for normal muscle function. Deficiency is most often seen in the progeny of beef cows fed home-grown feeds from selenium deficient pastures.

The congenital form of selenium and vitamin E deficiency is seen as stillbirths or the birth of weak calves who are unwilling or unable to suck unaided. There is also a delayed form which is usually seen in calves aged 1-4 months. Signs at this age often follow a period of sudden unaccustomed exercise typically following turnout. How the disease presents at this age varies depending on which muscles are affected- if the heart muscle is affected than the only sign is sudden death, alternatively if the respiratory muscles are affected then breathing difficulties may be seen, however the commonest presentation at this age is stiffness with difficulty standing due to disease affecting the skeletal muscles.

Selenium deficiency can also lead to an increase in retained placenta, poor growth rates and poor milk production.

Deficiency can be diagnosed using blood samples taken from 6-10 animals. It is particularly useful to sample cows in the last trimester of pregnancy as this will allow any deficiency to be corrected prior to calving.

It is possible to treat calves using injectable Vitesel, however this product should not be used in adult cows as anaphylactic reactions have been recorded. Therefore supplementation of adult cows should be through the use of in feed minerals or using a slow release bolus. Selenium can cross the placenta and is also concentrated in the colostrum meaning that supplementation of the dam's diet during late pregnancy will ensure good supply to the newborn calf.

Iodine Deficiency

Iodine is essential as a constituent of the thyroid hormones with 80% of the iodine in the body being found in the thyroid gland. Low iodine content in the soil leads to primary deficiency, however ingestion of thiocyanate found in brassicas (such as kale) or legumes (such as clover) can lead to secondary deficiency.

The classic sign of iodine deficiency is thyroid enlargement due to compensatory mechanisms incoked by the lack of thyroid hormone production. Calves born to deficient dams may be stillborn or weak and unwilling to suckle. Iodine deficiency has also been implicated in poor growth rates, poor milk production and retained placenta.

Diagnosis is simplest where a calf has been stillborn and relies on assessment of the thyroid weight and structure. Blood sampling can also be used to assess iodine status, however status can vary dependant on current daily iodine intake, stage of lactation, season and age of the animal.

In an emergency situation where stillbirths are being seen painting 5% iodine tincture onto the back or flank once a week can work well. Where longer term supplementation is required in feed minerals or slow release boluses can be used.

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Veterinary Surgeons

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